

CITY OF TAKOMA PARK, MARYLAND
(Adopted 3/28/05)

**PRESENTATION, INTERVIEWS, SPECIAL SESSION & WORKSESSION
OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

Monday, March 7, 2005

OFFICIALS PRESENT:

Mayor Porter	City Manager Matthews
Councilmember Austin-Lane	City Clerk Waters
Councilmember Barry	Community & Government Liaison Ludlow
Councilmember Elrich	ECD Director Daines
Councilmember Mizeur	Public Works Director Lott
Councilmember Seamens	Assistant Public Works Director Braithwaite
Councilmember Williams	

The City Council convened at 7:43 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building, 7500 Maple Avenue, Takoma Park, Maryland.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilmember Seamens announced that TPVFD Chief Jarboe will be going home tomorrow after having had heart surgery. On a different note, he remarked about the need for foster parents and “relief” foster parents.

Mayor Porter said that she attended a luncheon of the Women Legislators of Maryland. There may be some bond bills this year, but they will be limited.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Seth Grimes (on behalf of Sustainable Takoma) referred to the City Charter. He cited the language from the Charter, the Jack Carson PIA request related to legal expenses. He commented on the recodification project related legal expenses. He questioned whether these funds would have been better spent on the community center, economic development, the library and other areas of budget shortfalls. He called on the Council to direct the City Manager to examine these concerns, and offered to forward his comments.

Councilmember Austin-Lane remarked that there will be a public forum on the transport of hazardous materials this Wednesday evening.

PRESENTATION

1. Community Center Construction Project.

City Manager Matthews referred to the memos distributed this evening with respect to “Green Features” and the PCO status report. She provided further explanation about various options.

Ms. Porter noted the interest in the solar heating system.

Ms. Matthews assured that it is being explored.

Mr. Williams asked if there is any discussion of the possibility of a skylight, in terms of green features.

Ms. Matthews said that to the best of her understanding, there has been no further discussion beyond what has been reported in the past by Mr. Nunez.

Ms. Matthews questioned the Council’s consensus to pursue information on the cost of the skylight.

Ms. Austin-Lane said she would also like cost estimates on the solar heating system.

Ms. Matthews responded that she can arrange a meeting with Mr. Nunez and Mr. Norway to discuss information related to the skylight. She would not see the skylight as being incorporated in the RFP for the community plaza level. She noted the information gathering that we can do at this point.

Mr. Williams remarked that he wants an indication from the project architect, with respect to the skylight, that would reduce costs.

Mr. Seamens expressed concern about staff time in the exploration of this information.

Ms. Matthews stated that she can bring back information next week about the work that will be required. She then referred to the PCO status report, noting the revised amounts submitted from J.F. Knott Construction. Staff will be reviewing these figures and providing further information to the Council. We are still working to get information on the light weight concrete and paver areas. Staff will report next week and will need Council direction.

Mr. Seamens complimented Ms. Matthews on the progress in the construction. What is the large green machine in the pit?

Mr. Williams explained that it is a back-up generator.

Ms. Austin-Lane thanked Ms. Matthews for putting the “green features” on the fast track.

Where are we with progress on the crosswalk on Philadelphia?

Ms. Matthews offered to check with the Public Works Department and report back on the progress.

Mr. Elrich stated that he wants more explanation about some of the PCO items.

Ms. Austin-Lane questioned the impact on items which were value engineered.

Ms. Matthews responded. More information on these items will be provided.

Mr. Williams noted the progress in the construction and how the building is taking shape.

INTERVIEWS

2. Emergency Preparedness Committee – Stacy L. Baker.

The Council interviewed the applicant.

3. Safe Roadways Committee – Sanjay Grover and Buddy Daniels.

The Council interviewed the applicants.

Mr. Daniels, member of the Public Safety Citizens Advisory Committee (PSCAC), remarked about the planned Wednesday evening meeting.

Appointments are scheduled for next week.

PRESENTATION

4. M-NCPPC on Plans for Takoma Piney Branch Park.

Community & Government Liaison Ludlow described the park area. She introduced M-NCCCP presenters Ellen Masciocchi and Andrew Frank. Kevin Small (of Frederick Ward Associates) was also present. She noted that project is somewhat of a follow-on to a plan developed a number of years ago, which then had the Green Team involvement. We have now arrived at a facility plan. It would be helpful to have a resolution from the Council in support of the project. We have been communicating with the residents via e-mail, and will be going before the Arts Council with a proposal.

Kevin Small delivered a Power Point presentation about the facility plan for the Takoma Piney Branch Local Park. He remarked about the current uses of and environmental issues with the park. He described the existing facilities and conditions, explaining a “par course.” He remarked about the shelter and restrooms, and commented on visibility concerns, outlining the

project goals. He explained the Facility Plan in detail.

Mr. Elrich questioned the proposed perimeter path and the proximity to the outfield of the baseball field.

Mr. Small responded. He noted that a number of surface options have been discussed with the community and the city. The majority supported an asphalt surface.

Mr. Elrich restated his concern about the asphalt path and the proximity to the ballfield. What will be the implications of the lighting in the upper parking lot?

Ellen Masciocchi (M-NCPPC) noted that they have talked to the adjacent two residents and the Police. All were delighted with the lighting proposal.

Mr. Small remarked about the option of a motion detector to trigger the lights.

Ms. Porter noted that at the community meeting, there was discussion about the size of the parking lot.

Ms. Masciocchi discussed “signing” the location of parking, and commented on the potential draw of motorists due to the skate park development. We have heard some feedback that the parking lot is often over-crowded.

Ms. Austin-Lane said she is pleased that there is a plan in progress. The security concerns are being addressed with some of these changes. She is interested in responses to the mailing, and is very pleased with the inclusion of the skate park. She expressed concern about the chain gate off of Grant Avenue. Has there been thought to putting the handicap spaces in the parking lot versus putting them on Grant?

Mr. Small responded that there was discussion about the design of the gate which would better prohibit unauthorized motorists from entering the park.

Ms. Austin-Lane asked how traffic will be better directed to the parking lot.

Ms. Masciocchi presenter said that it is still being discussed. The initial thought was to install additional signage.

Mr. Small suggested that the City’s Public Works Department move forward now with erection of signs—to evaluate the effectiveness of additional signs.

Mr. Seamens thanked M-NCPPC staff for the design and the attention to erosion concerns. He appreciates the emphasis on security, but thinks that it should be even more of an emphasis. It is a key issue for this park.

Ms. Ludlow responded that Park Police and City Police have had discussions. Clearing the “view” from the parking lot will be helpful.

Mr. Seamens suggested that City Manager talk with Park & Planning about a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that would allow City Police to exercise some jurisdiction in the park.

Mr. Williams referred to Mr. Elrich’s concern, and suggested a short segment of fence that would isolate the path.

Ms. Porter asked about the timeline for the requested resolution.

Ms. Masciocchi responded that it would need to be adopted prior to May 5th.

Ms. Ludlow said that she will put more information about the proposed improvements on the City’s web site.

Ms. Austin-Lane suggested that the project goals be included in any posting of the project description.

SPECIAL SESSION

5. Resolution of Condolence (Robert Dawson Williams - father of Councilmember Williams).

Ms. Porter described the resolution.

Moved by Porter; seconded by Elrich.

Ms. Porter remarked about the attributes and community contributions of Mr. Williams.

Mr. Seamens extended condolences. He complimented Bruce’s accomplishments, shaped by those of his father.

Mr. Barry said it was wonderful to see the rich life that Mr. Williams Sr. led and the work that he offered to the community. He must have been a remarkable man.

Buddy Daniels noted two years ago, his father passed away. He extended an offer to talk.

Resolution #2005-14 was adopted unanimously (VOTING FOR: Porter, Austin-Lane, Barry, Elrich, Mizeur, Seamens, Williams).

**RESOLUTION #2005-14
(Attached)**

6. Single Reading Ordinance re: Contract for Phase I of the Gateway/Wayfinding Sign System.

ECD Director Daines explained the ordinance, referring to the background information included in the agenda item cover page. We are looking at two gateway signs, two area identification signs, one pedestrian kiosk, and four historic district signs. Mary Stover will speak to the matter of additional funding for an a kiosk.

Ms. Mizeur noted receipt of e-mails in support of the gateway sign at New Hampshire/East-West Highway. The greatest support has been for gateway signs and kiosks. She would hold off on doing the area identification signs.

Mr. Seamens voiced support for Mizeur's suggestion to not fund park signs. He noted that the two lowest income neighborhoods have no proposed signs, and urged placement of a sign on Flower Avenue.

Mr. Elrich said that Flower Avenue is one of the busiest intersections that we have in the City—a logical place for a kiosk.

Ms. Austin-Lane stated that she received a suggestion for a gateway sign on Fenton Avenue. This is a good location for us to establish a primary gateway.

Ms. Porter commented that people are more interested in the gateway signs than the area signs. She noted the suggestion on the table to replace the area signs with gateway signs. We have heard suggestions about four locations for gateway signs.

Mr. Seamens agreed. However, he suggested that we not put up any kiosk unless we get business support for funding.

Ms. Porter asked if the county is supportive.

Ms. Daines responded that they have been involved in conversations. Staff can further discuss the proposals with the county. She noted the proposed ordinance.

Moved by Austin-Lane; seconded by Elrich.

Ordinance #2005-6 was adopted unanimously (VOTING FOR: Porter, Austin-Lane, Barry, Elrich, Mizeur, Seamens, Williams).

ORDINANCE #2005-6
(Attached)

WORKSESSION

7. Neighborhood Business Works Application.

Mary Stover (on behalf of Old Town Business Association (OTBA)) explained the OTBA application. Most of the funds would go toward a facade and landscape program. They are also applying for signage, two pedestrian kiosks and a historic tertiary sign. There are a few small items that are included in the application.

Ms. Mizeur asked if it would be helpful to get individual letters of support from Councilmembers. She offered to sign a letter of support, noting that she will not be here next week but wants to go on record in support.

Ms. Porter questioned whether there is a concern about the litter that could be generated by the kiosk brochures.

Ms. Stover responded.

Mr. Seamens noted her work with the Main Street Program.

Ms. Stover cited the contact information for anyone interested in volunteering in the program.

BREAK - The Council recessed for a scheduled break at 9:32 p.m. and later reconvened.

8. Arts & Humanities Commission Cultural Plan.

(Residents Participating in Discussion: Randy Cohen, Diana Kohn, Emily Shillingburg, and Bodil Meleney)

Emily Shillingburg provided a presentation of the cultural plan, its mission, objectives and anticipated contributions to the community. The Arts and Humanities Commission (AHC) wants to encourage the development of a thriving arts community in the city. There have been surveys, forums and one-on-one meetings with a variety of people in the city. The commission has met to synthesize the data and to create the plan. She noted the three value statements in the vision of the plan and highlighted the goals of the plan in detail (i.e., outreach, cultural education and programs, public art, facilities and venues, and funding). The plan fits within the context of regional master plans. The AHC hopes that this plan will be adopted by the community. We are here to solicit the Council's feedback on what has been envisioned, so far. We want to present a final plan by the end of April, and to get the plan out to the public along with a fact sheet.

Mr. Elrich said that the plan, thus far, is "really cool." The plan has really tapped into the arts energy in the community. He remarked about his interview with the committee. It seems very well laid out. He is excited about implementation of the plan.

Ms. Austin-Lane agreed. It is amazing what has been done with limited resources and the overall, volunteer effort. She is eager to see what happens next, and hopes that we see some of

these ideas hit-the-ground soon. She encouraged coordination with the business associations.

Mr. Barry commended the Commission for the plan and reinforced the statement about the need for a process. It is important to have a fair and transparent process.

Mr. Williams agreed with comments of previous speakers. He noted the considerable work that went into the plan, and encouraged moving forward.

Bodil Meleney stated that the AHC will look for funding opportunities and plan to move forward as they are able.

Mr. Williams remarked about recent activities at Strathmore Hall in Rockville and the overwhelming demand for attendance.

Mr. Seamens commended the work of the AHC. He urged reaching out to the diverse communities in the city to tap into their art venues.

Commission members responded that the AHC has started making contacts with leaders of some of the diverse communities. They want to be all inclusive.

Ms. Mizeur complimented the work that has taken place, noting specific projects that have been carried out while the plan has been under development. The “type” of community we are, is changing because of the cost to live in the city. She fears that over time, we will have a large attrition of folks who rely on their artistic abilities to make a living.

Commission members responded that there are programs we could research as a way to make sure that we are not losing the artist community in the city.

Randy Cohen commented on neighborhood incentive programs, noting the example of a program in Providence, Rhode Island.

Ms. Austin-Lane remarked about the proposal for an in-home studio tour.

Mr. Barry suggested that we could have section on the City’s web site to highlight art.

Ms. Porter said that we have a great model for the in-home art tour with the House and Garden Tour.

Diana Kohn commented that in the past few years, there has been an opportunity to include an in-home studio on the House/Garden Tour.

Ms. Austin-Lane referred to earlier agenda item (i.e., presentation by P&P regarding park development), suggesting that staff duplicate some of the approaches used by the AHC in development of this plan in coordination with community and city input.

Ms. Porter concurred with previous remarks, and thanked the AHC for efforts to reach out to the community.

9. Trash Truck Purchase.

Public Works Director Lott explained the proposal for purchase of a new trash truck, noting that Assistant Director Braithwaite has identified a good deal of background information, supporting this purchase. He commented on the essential mission of sanitation collection.

Ms. Braithwaite remarked about the structure of the collection schedule. Staff has asked to postpone purchase of trucks over past years to meet funding concerns. There is funding in the Equipment Replacement Reserve to replace this truck. There is a formula that calculates the prediction of adequate reserves for replacement in the spreadsheet. In this case, the calculation fell a bit short.

Mr. Seamens asked about the total number of trash trucks in the current fleet.

Ms. Braithwaite explained that there are four. However, there is no back-up truck. Once we replace this truck, we will dispose of the oldest truck. It is a very old truck. Staff would encourage that the department get rid of the two old trucks, upon purchase of this truck.

Mr. Elrich encouraged thought about conversion plans (e.g., leaf collection, extra back-up truck).

Mr. Seamens said there is some balance with “salvageability.”

Mr. Lott remarked about safety issues associated with older models.

Mr. Barry asked about the new technology on this truck.

Ms. Braithwaite responded. New technology is largely in transmission upgrades.

Mr. Barry supported the purchase of the truck.

Ms. Austin-Lane questioned the resale value of trucks.

Ms. Braithwaite said that she would have to investigate the question.

Mr. Lott noted that we are talking about a 17-20 year old truck that is being contemplated for disposal.

Ms. Braithwaite remarked that she can look at a depreciation schedule for the new truck’s value.

Ms. Austin-Lane asked where are we with getting information on the City and County charges for trash collection.

Ms. Matthews responded that we have some information which can certainly be shared with the Council.

Ms. Braithwaite provided further comments, noting that we will save money by making the purchase sooner than later.

Mr. Elrich questioned the county's special recycling program.

10. Revision of Council Policy Related to Advertising Committee Vacancies.

City Clerk Waters explained the resolution.

Mr. Elrich urged that he wants to ensure that the wording of the revising resolution is sufficient to convey the full intent.

Mr. Seamens said that he wants to make sure that whatever alternative method used (i.e., aside from notice in the City's Newsletter) reaches the diverse community. Part of the issue raised in December was to ensure that there is an administrative process to keep us in line with the policy. Mr. Elrich said that it seems that we need a discussion with the City Attorney about a more proactive approach to notice. We need to talk about how we get that kind of guidance from the City Attorney's office.

Ms. Porter proposed that the points raised be referred to the City Manager for further consideration.

11. City Manager Evaluation Criteria.

Ms. Porter stated that the evaluation criteria has been made available to the public. It will be used in the upcoming evaluation.

ADJOURNMENT

The Council adjourned at 10:41 p.m.